

I am Judy Alter, Director of Protect California Ballots, a non-partisan group of citizens who want to observe every step of our election processes, such as: registration, private contracts for election administration, canvas processes and procedures, ballot chain of custody, and especially counting the votes on our ballots. We are known for conducting citizens' exit polls.

The use of any software keeps us, citizens, from actually observing these counting processes. We cannot insure that the steps before, during, and after are carried out correctly, following the laws, and that the numbers are added up accurately. Even open source software, technically non-proprietary, does not allow citizens who are not computer programmers to observe the vote counting. Further we cannot even insure that the open source software said to be in use on Election Day is the exact software written and certified. Election officials cannot continue to defend the use of software controlled processes as fast because the media want the results before their deadlines when we, the citizens, do not know if the votes are added up accurately. We have sacrificed accuracy for speed when it is not necessary.

How can this office of the California government take upon itself the right or privilege to continue to disregard a basic principle of any democratic election, public counting of votes? Our current Secretary of State inherited this non-democratic secret vote counting situation from her predecessors. Do we not need to amend our CA constitution to say that we will not count our votes in public? That is the logical conclusion of computer counted elections: citizens no longer have the right to have their votes counted in public.

Yes, we are among the many citizens who want to return to hand counted paper ballots, counted at the precincts, videotaped and witnessed by members of various party observers. Every precinct in CA has about the same number of assigned voters. The average number of actual Election Day ballots in Los Angeles precincts ranges from 300-600. A second shift of citizens can be sworn in to count when the polls close as occurs in New Hampshire. The citizens need not be paid. We can use the jury method to secure enough citizens to count the votes. Students, seniors, anyone who can count to ten and read can count ballots especially if we use the sort, stack, count, count method of vote counting. Critics of hand-counting and election officials cannot continue to use the excuse of not having enough people to count ballots by hand in our large county of Los Angeles or anywhere in California as an excuse to continue to hold non-democratic elections where the counting cannot be observed because our votes are counted on any kind of software.

Judy Alter
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